

Review Khalistan an Academic Analysis: Satinder Singh (1982) [184P] Amar Prakashan

Book Review: Kavneet Singh



Satinder Singh an urban Sikh himself has written a book in the height of the pre-1984 calamity of Punjab. Notwithstanding the author's own biases even though he claims to be unbiased there is truth in some of the initial chapters of this book.

Chapter 1; Punjab a Sikh State:

However, as the urbanites prospered economically there appeared to be little to distinguish them from their Hindu co-residents except the Sikh's TURBAN, BEARD, etc. By the late 60's a prominent urbanite Sikh industrialist in Amritsar noted that because of social resemblance and economic integration between themselves and the Hindus there was a positive need for Sikhs to keep their turban.....[Page 9]

The khatri percentage among the Sikh population is only 1.5% and it is primarily among this class that there is intermarriage with the Hindus. Further among the so-called Punjabi Hindu making their first born a Sikh was purely motivated by economics to get preferential government jobs set by the British for the Sikhs, later stated by the author. *Thus when those urbanites close to master Tara Singh succumbed to their own careerist aspirations, most of them deserting for material gain of one kind or another this in no way meant (for them) that they had deserted the Panth.....[Page 28]*

The author sees the harsh reality of the situation and one of the reasons for Master Tara Singh's political demise.

Chapter 2; Punjab-a Problem State:

The genesis of the current problem of Punjab.....They rejected out of hand the Muslim League's tantalizing offer of a sovereign state.....They also cold shouldered the British offer, " to enable them to have political feet of their own on which they may walk into current history". Instead, the Sikhs accepted at its face value a "solemn undertaking" by the Congress promising "a setup in the north wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom.".....Page 34-35]

The shortsightedness and political ineptitude of Master Tara Singh and other Sikh leaders completely shortchanged Sikhs of their rightful destiny.

A majority of educated Sikhs are also of the considered opinion that the Constitution is heavily tilted against their community.....Government interference in the personal law and religious affairs of the Sikhs.....Promulgation of an ordinance amending the DGM Act, without consulting the SGPC, Amritsar in gross violation.....why should quotas be fixed for each state in the country where voluntary recruitment is in vogue...[Page 42-43]

These demands and inequities meted out to a minority out of communal biases have still not been addressed and continue to fester eating into the psyche of the Sikhs. These issues are lying latent and dormant under the steel boot of the Indian government.

Chapter 3; Khalistan – a Sovereign Sikh State:

Lastly, by gratuitously transforming the half backed concept of “Sikhs are a Nation’ into a sovereign State of Khalistan and by giving undue publicity to the activities.....[Page 47]

Either the author is naïve or the cat was let out of the bag much later, i.e., the propagation and funding of the extremist element in India and abroad was done by RAW completely to color the Sikhs as anti-national, communal and traitors.

Chapter 4; Punjab – Hindu vs Sikh:

If Hindu-Sikh Brotherhood was temporarily thrown to the winds, then the state government in its own wisdom contributed to the crisis.....[Page 55]

That is a loaded statement. If there was a brotherhood then the Sikhs had that with everyone including Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, etc, not just Hindus. The Hindus themselves fall into a myriad of groups. The author himself an urban Sikh is really talking about the Khatri Hindus who have always had a love-hate relationship with their Khatri Sikh relatives and friends. The non-khatri Sikhs have always had an equitable relationship with all faiths and not particularly with the Hindus at all.

Chapter 5; Khalistan – An Academic Analysis:

One only has to go to the Sikh Historic gurdwaras.....there are always a number of Hindus there, obviously very devout, with faith in and respect for the Guru Granth Sahib.....[Page 67]

Just because Hindus go to gurdwaras how does that define them being Sikhs. The question arises that if Muslims, Jews or Christians whose beliefs are more in line with the monotheistic principles of the Sikh Faith start coming to gurdwaras would that make all of them Sikhs. Further why do Hindus worship at gurdwaras when the Sikh Faith is diametrically opposite to the Hindu beliefs and there is barely any commonality at all; even though they are welcome. In fact there should be more Muslims, Jews and Christians going to Gurdwaras. It's again the personal bias of the author towards the urban Hindus which shows in his writings since he is indirectly related to them.

Chapter 6; Khalistan – the Pure Land:

The Punjab's Sikh is in a perplexed mood, underscored by a persecution complex vis a vis the rest of the country.....[Page 84]

Even though Satinder Singh understands the basic problems of the Sikhs he nevertheless sticks the “persecution complex” label onto the Sikhs. He simply cannot be that naïve, not to see the glaring racist retrograde policies of the center vis a vis the Sikhs and Punjab.

Chapter 7; The Sant – Bhindrawale:

The Sant rose from total obscurity in April 1978.....Sant Jaranil Singh Bhindrawale is a creature of petty politics in Punjab.....The Bhindrawale menace should have been tackled long ago.....[Page 88-91]

The absolute clarity and background of martyred Sant only came about after he stoutly defended the Darbar Sahib in 1984. This 'menace' as described by the author had more good and guts than all the politicians and educated leaders put together and much more as he stood up for the common Sikh and all the practical issues at hand. The Sant was not a two timing weasel but a honest selfless man ready to take a stand for the cause of the 'Panth' as the Sikhs of days bygone.

Chapter 8; The Sikh Frustrations:

We want Sikh Raj because at the moment we are slaves and the Hindus have betrayed us....[Page 104]

There is no question that the Hindu government broke every solemn public oath prior to 1947 and continuously till today and has never fulfilled any promise that they agreed on.

Chapters 9; The Arrest:

For the Punjabi Hindu the sense of political helplessness is oppressive. He sees a society dominated by the robust Sikh who singles him out as Mahashay (babu) and a lala..... [Page 114]

The author seems sentimental towards the babu; but its about time that the Hindu 'lala' gets a taste of his own medicine. Imagine what the Sikh feels everyday all over India lost in the sea of corrosive Hinduism.

Chapter 10; The Hijack Drama:

A word must be said about the authorities skewed sense of accommodating religious sentiments. If Indian Airlines had not made it a policy to allow Sikhs to carry kirpans on board their flights, the hijack might never have occurred.....[Page 130]

Satinder Singh has shown his true colors of being biased against the Sikhs and siding with his 'lala brethern'. In 1982 all Airlines carried metal forks and knives to serve food to passengers. If anyone wanted to hijack a plane with a small sharp weapon there were plenty on the plane itself. If the hijackers like Gajendra Singh really wanted to kill anyone I am sure they would have found a sympathizer to get guns on board. I wonder how many Hindus have goaded Satinder into writing this book. Indira Gandhi made the two Hindu Pandey brothers members of the Indian Parliament who hijacked a plane earlier in India to protest her arrest for illegal activity. But when Sikhs did the same, to protest the blatant discrimination against their entire nation it automatically becomes a crime. Well these double standards by the Hindus, is exactly what the Sikhs have been protesting about and Satinder Singh cleverly makes absolutely no mention in his book.

Chapter 11-23;

Not since the Mughals has there been such a widespread conspiracy to attack Sikhs.....[Page 181]

Satinder Singh quotes Bhan Singh the then Secretary of the Akali Dal who really sums up the truth as what the Sikhs have to deal with on a daily basis.

Most of the other chapters in the later half of the book are about the views of various individuals most of whom are either crooked politicians or government agents.

Some of the initial chapters do lay bare the harsh truth of the ground realities but most of the book is biased towards the Hindus and the government. The book is poorly researched, mundane writing with a very small bibliography. I would not miss the book or recommend it.